

Washington, DC – Today Reps. Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore), Darlene Hooley (D-Ore), Greg Walden (R-Ore), Peter DeFazio (D-Ore) and David Wu (D-Ore) introduced a resolution, H.Res.1321, honoring the Oregon National Guard Youth Leadership Challenge Program. For almost 15 years, this program has worked to promote self-confidence and fellowship among at-risk youth. It has been awarded the United Service Organizations' award for "Best Overall Program" three times in the past six years.

"I am proud to honor this outstanding organization," said Rep. Blumenauer. "Since 1994 it has impacted the lives of thousands of Oregonians who were likely to drop out of high school. Most of these kids went on to earn a high school degree or its equivalent. This is another example of Oregon leading the way with a program that truly makes a difference in the lives of our youth."

More than 3,500 Oregon teens likely to drop out of high school or engage in destructive behavior have entered the Oregon National Guard Youth Leadership Challenge Program, which is both free and voluntary.

"I am proud that the Oregon National Guard Youth Leadership Challenge Program is being recognized for its tremendous success in helping at-risk kids," said Rep. DeFazio. "For the last 15 years they have been proving that kids who struggle in school or act out are not a lost cause. They have a remarkable record of helping young Oregonians get back on track. I have been inspired by the stories of participants about the impact the program has had on their lives and I hope the example they have set will be emulated around the nation."

"Oregon Youth Challenge is the best in the nation, period," said Rep. Hooley. "For the past decade, OYC has set the pace for the national programming, leading the nation each year in awards that are a tribute to the fine young men and women who participate."

And no mention of Oregon Youth Challenge should go without echoing the name of Brigadier General Michael Caldwell: Oregon Youth Challenge would not be there if not for him. His tenacity helped overcome the many challenges in building a program that nobody had heard of or understood. Budgetary threats nearly closed it several times, but Mike always found ways and means to keep it alive."

"I am truly impressed with the efforts of the Oregon Youth Challenge Program in providing our state's at-risk youth with the discipline, skills and opportunities they need to lead positive, healthy lives," said Rep. Walden. "Since 2001, the program has received numerous national awards for the outstanding work of its cadre and staff. Although it serves all of Oregon, I'm proud to honor a program that calls the high desert of the Second District home."

"This program provides new hope to young people who were struggling to complete high school," said Rep. Wu. "I have met some of the bright kids who are turning their lives around thanks to this innovative program. I am confident that, with the skills that they learned from the National Guard, they and the other program graduates will create bright futures for themselves."